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Gold Ornaments

From United States of Colombia.

BY GEORGE F. KUNZ.

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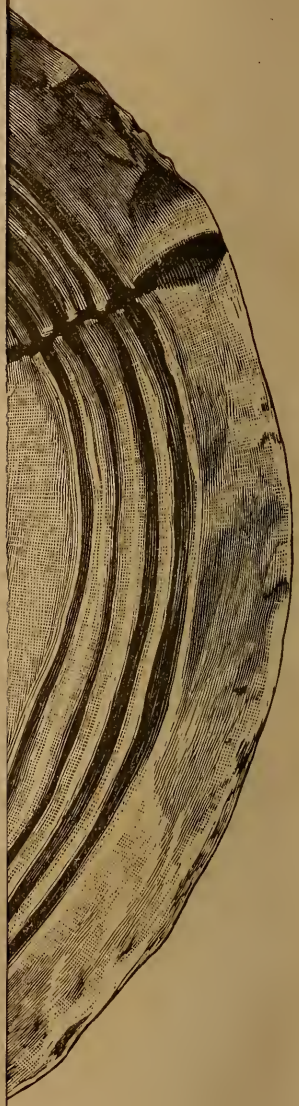

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GOLD ORNAMENTS FROM UNITED STATES OF COLOMBIA.

This series of gold ornaments, kindly loaned me for description by Mr. S. L. M. Barlow and Mr. J. M. Münoz, were found on the banks of the Mingindo river, a tributary of the Artato, in the state of Cavca, United States of Colombia, South America. With them were also found a number of plain undecorated nose rings that weighed 6, 10, 34, and 38 dwts respectively. With one exception these nose rings were all about 920 fine. The only history coming with them was that they were brought in by a negro woman who had found them in a grave and who sold them for their simple gold value to the person who brought

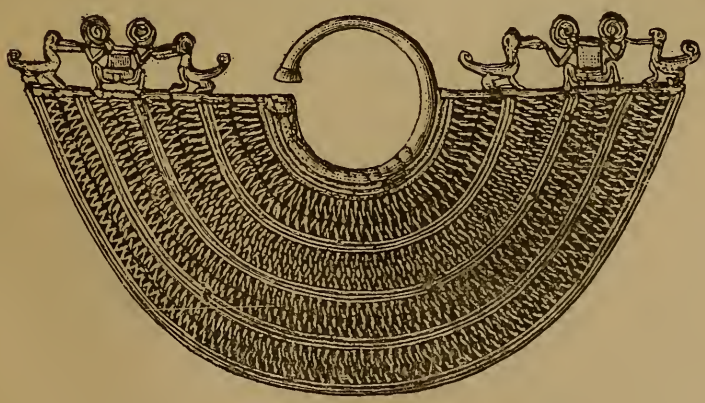

Fig. 2.

them to the United States. The largest is a decorated plaque ornament measuring 7 9-16 inches (20 cm.) across and weighing 5 oz., 13 dwts (193 grammes). See Fig. 1 It was evidently used as a

breast ornament or as the centre of a shield, being attached with nails or suspended by a string as the case required, by means of two small holes near the upper part. The general appearance of the ornament is that of an attempt at a moonlike face, and the style of workmanship does not vary much from that of the gold object

Fig. 3.

No 2 from the Florida mound described in a former paper. There are three raised ridges or lines around the shield, that bend and geniculate, as it were, at the upper end, running down the center of the shield very nearly to the two raised rings with central dots, that seem to have been intended for eyes. Another raised ridge

Fig. 4.

runs around the outside of all these, the raised disk in the center seeming to be the point from which they take their direction. This interesting piece belongs to Mr. S. L. M. Barlow.

A banker of South America informed Mr. Barlow that he had purchased full one hundred of these shield-like ornaments simply for their bullion value, and then melted them and sold them as such, and that of all these no drawing or record had been kept. The abundance of these and other gold ornaments which have for nearly three hundred years been taken from this part of South America, cannot but lead us to conclude that the time when they were worn was truly a golden age.

The nose ring is a beautiful piece of aboriginal work, weighing 26.5 grammes 17 dwts. It is 3¾ inches (83 mm.) long, 2 1-10 inches (52 mm.) wide. See Fig. 2. The ring can be readily bent on one side, and then adjusted to the nose, and in a semicircle below this are arranged four rows of a woven, gallery-shaped net work of gold wire, between which and the outside of each of the galleries are three straight wires of gold to which the galleries are attached. On the top of this semicircle, on each side of the ring to fit in the nose, is arrangeda row of three figures made of a single piece of gold wire skilfully twisted into shape. The center figure of the trio is a human-like object with each arm extended out and joined to the bill of a duck-like object, there being one group of these figures on each side of the central ring.

A flat plate of gold found among these objects, 7 cm. wide (2¾ inches) and 12.5 cm. long (5 inches) is only a remnant of what was originally a belt long enough to encircle the waist. It is quite thin, bends readily, and is wholly devoid of ornamentation. See Fig. 3. A number of practical silversmiths who have examined it believe that it was rolled, in fact that it could not have been made in any other way, but a gold worker suggested that it might have been beaten out between two pieces of leather. How this could have produced so even and uniform a strip, and by what means they rolled it, if indeed they did, are not known.

A curious chain is also in Mr. Barlow's possession. It weighs 8 ounces 18 dwts (89 grammes), is over two feet long, and is composed of crescent-like pieces with round eyelets at both ends working in small round links by which they are connected together without the use of solder, forming a very strong chain.

An interesting gold ornament from the United States of Colombia, evidently used for a brooch with a raised figure of the virgin and child, said to be eighteenth century work, was identical in workmanship with Fig. 2.

GEO. F. KUNZ.

New York City.

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